



Memorandum

TO: Historic Landmarks Commission

FROM: Courtney Damkroger

SUBJECT: Japantown Historic Context &
Reconnaissance Level Survey

DATE: October 21, 2004

BACKGROUND

Attached please find a copy of the Japantown Historic Context and Reconnaissance Level Survey. Planning staff has provided a paper copy of the main report and a CD rom with the entire report in order to conserve on copying and mailing costs. The Appendices which include the maps, bibliography, survey matrix and Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Records are located on the CD. The survey area is bounded by North First Street on the west, Taylor Street on the north, 10th Street on the east and Empire Street on the south. The survey was conducted by Carey & Co. Inc. Architecture.

Interest in conducting the context and survey project came in large part from members of the Japantown community who were active in the statewide California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project. This project resulted in state legislation to help preserve and promote the state's three remaining Japantowns in San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles. In response to that interest, the Planning Department applied for a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant in 2003 from the Office of Historic Preservation to help support the costs of the project. Japantown members pledged \$5,000 from their Proposition 40 Cultural Heritage Grant funds and a \$5,000 CLG grant was awarded to the City for the project. The remaining \$40,000 of the \$50,000 budget came from the City's Settlement Fund for the loss of historic buildings.

Through the California Japantown Preservation Pilot Project, San Jose's Japantown incorporated the nonprofit Japantown Community Congress. Members of the Congress together with a representative of the San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission, Japantown Business Association, and San Jose Redevelopment Agency formed a survey committee to oversee the project. Together with Planning staff, the survey committee prepared the Request for Proposals, reviewed all of the submittals, interviewed the finalists, selected the consultant team, prepared the scope of work and worked with the Carey & Co. throughout the project. The survey committee met on a monthly basis to track the project's progress. Members of the survey committee also participated in numerous community meetings and events on behalf of the project. In addition, Planning staff provided a monthly status update to the Commission at their regular meetings.

Following review by the Landmarks Commission, Planning staff plans to send the survey to the San Jose City Council for their review and acceptance. Complete copies of the report will be provided to the California Room at the San Jose Public Library, History San Jose and the

Japanese American Resource Center/Museum. A complete copy of the survey has been sent to the California Office of Historic Preservation in fulfillment of the CLG grant obligations.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not a project.

ANALYSIS

The report consists of the development of a Japantown historic context and a reconnaissance level survey of 67 buildings within and around the commercial core. Historic contexts are the patterns and trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (and significance) within history or prehistory is made clear (National Register Bulletin 15). In the case of the Japantown project, the historic context is a record of the area from the perspective of the built environment and how that environment helps to interpret the history of Japanese Americans in San Jose and the United States. The historic context must be developed prior to the evaluation of individual resources in order to determine whether and which resources are significant.

The reconnaissance level survey is conducted by first walking through the survey area and photographing and recording very basic property and descriptive information for each of the approximately 680 buildings. Each building is recorded in the Reconnaissance Survey Matrix found on the attached CD rom. Sixty-seven buildings were selected by Carey & Co. for additional descriptive information based on initial findings from the context. Carey & Co. selected 67 buildings within and around the commercial core to be recorded on Department of Parks and Recreation 523A Primary Record forms. The Primary Records include only descriptive data about each building. Evaluation of buildings for historic significance was not a part of this contract.

The Recommendations section of the report represents the consultant's suggestions for next steps. The scope of work for the project did not include any evaluations for significance; and therefore, there are no specific recommendations regarding the eligibility for the designation of any resources. The consultants state that, based on their research for the context and reconnaissance level survey, it appears that there are resources that, as a group, may qualify for listing as a historic district, locally and in the National Register of Historic Places or as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) and/or National Historic Landmark district. The National Historic Landmark program is reserved for the nation's most significant cultural and historic resources. Individual resources within the area may also qualify as individually significant and eligible as local landmarks as well as for the National Register. The Commission may remember that the TCP designation is a more recently developed category of significance. A TCP is a place that is important due to the role the place plays in the cultural practices or beliefs of a living community. There must be a connection between the place and the culture, and TCPs reflect a range of place types from religious sites to urban or rural communities.

It is important to note that the recommendations are based on the findings of the context and reconnaissance level survey, but that in order to pursue any of the above recommendations an intensive level survey would be required. An intensive level survey would include research and evaluation for significance of individual resources, a refinement of the historic context based

upon the findings of the individual building research and an evaluation of potential eligibility and designation options. This second phase is dependent upon securing adequate funding.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The scope of work for the project included a significant public outreach component. A survey committee was formed to oversee the project and was composed of the co-chairs of the Japantown Community Congress Historic District Committee and representatives of the San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission, Japantown Business Association, and San Jose Redevelopment Agency. The Historic Landmarks Commission received monthly status updates on the project from the time of the CLG grant award in August 2003 to September 2004 at their regular monthly meetings. In addition, the following public meetings and participation took place:

- January 24, 2004: The survey committee held two workshops on the project at the Japantown Community Congress meeting.
- May 2, 2004 Nikkei Matsuri festival: Attendance and community interviews
- May 5, 2004: Carey & Co. presentation on the project to the Historic Landmarks Commission.
- August 3, 2004: Meeting with Japantown Community Congress board of directors to receive feedback on the draft report.
- August 4, 2004: Carey & Co. progress report on the project to the Historic Landmarks Commission.
- September 9, 2004: Meeting with Japantown Community Congress board of directors and members of the community to receive feedback on the draft recommendations.

The Planning Department is working to have the report posted on our website under Historic Preservation prior to the November 3, 2004 meeting. Those interested in viewing the report online should go to: <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/planning/Historic/Index.html> and look at the "What's New" section.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission review and accept the Japantown Historic Context and Reconnaissance Level Survey Report.

Courtney Damkroger
Historic Preservation Officer

Attachments: Japantown Historic Context and Reconnaissance Level Survey Report &
CD rom

C: Leslie Masunaga and Jim McClure, co-chairs, Japantown Community Congress,
Historic District Committee

